



ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG UG STUDENTS IN GUNTUR: A CASE STUDY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language connects humans. It is the conduit for conveying and understanding emotions. A language is a potent tool that has evolved with time from grunts and screams to the present acronyms. In the present world, 7099 languages are spoken. The majority of these languages are limited to a small populace. However, the importance of language skills is essential. The first thing we learn as a child is to speak with our body language. We then learn and start using verbal language. However, language is not limited to speaking but also includes reading, writing, gestures, and signs. Speaking one or more languages has many benefits. Being born in society, we naturally will have a mother tongue. But working and gaining proficiency in a second language will create greater scope for one's professional career. Hence, language skills are important for students and professionals alike. In a country like India, good command of the English language can make a world of difference in one's job prospects. It has occupied a major part in the curriculum in India where multiple vernacular languages co-exist.

2. English and LSRW skills:

Of all the languages in the world, English deserves to be regarded as a basal language. One of every four on earth can be reached through English. English is established as the most appreciated and widely accepted language of the present world by reason of its accomplishments in every single realm such as education, economics, marketing, globalization, science, media, modern information etc. This prestigious language is extracting attention to itself as a language of virtue throwing up lavish possibilities it offers to a person for prosperity and advancement in life.

English as a second language turns out to be unavoidable as well as inescapable in the Indian Education system structure. To learn a second language, a psychological and emotional participation is required to communicate forcefully and to elucidate linguistic signification. The motive of this study is also to be acquainted with the importance of making use of all skills in learning English. The Four basic skills of learning are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). These are the four potentialities that authorize a person to assimilate, construct and make use of the language in a meaningful social conversation.

In order to achieve personnel and professional goals, and to sustain one's living conditions in an appropriate manner, it is essential for the individuals to bring about improvements in LSRW skills. Irrespective of the educational qualifications, it is necessary for the individuals to augment these skills. Similarly, to acquire any new or second language, that particular student/individual should simultaneously proceed with these four language skills.

3. Recent E.M.I Policy in Andhra Pradesh:

In The Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to make English the medium of learning at all degree colleges in the state beginning the academic year 2020-21. The decision to make English the language of instruction is bound to immensely benefit these students. The Department of Higher Education of Andhra Pradesh feels the introduction of English medium education at the undergraduate level would enhance the career prospects of graduates. The Andhra Pradesh government had announced in September 2019 that it would introduce English as the medium of instruction in all government schools, and gradually convert all Telugu-medium schools to English-medium ones while still teaching mother tongue Telugu as a compulsory subject.

The official records proves that, of over 2.62 lakh students who have taken admissions in degree colleges across the state in 2020-21, 65,981 are in Telugu-medium institutes. Of these 65,981 Telugu-medium students, 24,007 are pursuing BA, 16,925 B.Com and 24,960 B.Sc. Officials said that the data they collected indicates that BA students get into jobs in sales and marketing, apart from journalism and research, and proficiency in English would enhance their prospects. Keeping in mind the fact that most companies have started to prefer multilingual candidates and the emphasis on English, it is essential that the students pursue their under graduation (UG) in English medium.

As the 4th year of the undergraduate curriculum is in research orientation, it would be difficult to pursue quality work in Ph. D if the UG is studied in Telugu medium. Hence, the transition from Telugu medium in Intermediate to English medium in Degree would be easier when compared to the transition from Telugu medium in Degree to English Medium in Post- Graduation. Studying market-oriented programmes in Degree in Telugu Medium is difficult as the reference material is available in English. In order to facilitate a smooth transition, the Department of Higher Education of AP has also introduced life skill courses like personality development and leadership and human values and professional ethics. Every student should mandatorily select at least one life skill course in the first two semesters and two in third. The curriculum is thoroughly revised with effect from 2020-21 with a mandatory internship for 10 months, and 30 per cent of the revised curriculum consists of skilled oriented programs.

But many student organizations and Teachers associations were against to this move, stating that the students from poor families could not switch over to English medium in a short span of time. It is a general notion that the Students of Government colleges in the country are often found to be less competent in spoken English. Since the Government has adopted EMI (English medium instruction) policy, the prevailing linguistic condition on the colleges is an "English only environment." In this context, students are required to communicate in English both inside and outside their classroom, but they desperately struggle to cope with this environment,

4. The Ground level realities: Primary data Analysis:

In this connection, the present study is an attempt to understand and to explain this problem. To examine the ground level facts, it set three aims: to evaluate students' current level of proficiency in spoken English in selected Government colleges of Guntur, to investigate the reasons, and to offer remedies. The Guntur city is purposively selected for the present study. There are 04 of Government and Government funded UG colleges in Guntur city. Out of these, Out of these 04, 01 is Women's college and the remaining 03 are co-education colleges. There are about 2500 UG admissions in those 04 colleges every year. 5 percent of the total, ie. 125 students have been selected for the study. A pre-tested questionnaire is canvassed among these 125 selected students and results have been analysed and presented in the following paragraphs.

Distribution of Sample by Program of study and gender is collected and presented in Table No-1. The table reveals more than 45 percent of the sample is female and the remaining is male. It can also be observed from the table that most of the female is found in Commerce with 2.6 percent followed by Science with 37.5 per cent. The number of students opting the Arts groups is found to fall in the study area.

As medium of instruction at Plus two level is an important indicator to examine the level of proficiency at UG level. Hence the data is also collected and presented in the Table. It can be observed from the table that, the percentage of students who studied English medium is very less in Arts combinations (33.3 per cent). It is 65.5 per cent and 60 per cent respectively in Commerce and Science programmes respectively.

Another important indicator of language proficiency at UG level is their attainment of marks at their intermediate level. Hence an attempt is also made in the study to examine percentage of marks attained at their plus two level and the results are summarized in Table proves that about 15 percent of Commerce students attained less than 40 percent marks where as no student is found in either in Arts or in Science with this percentage. On the other hand about 75 percent of Science students got more than 60 per cent at their Intermediate. It is 65 per cent in case of Commerce and \$7 per cent in case of Arts. Most of the students with less than 60 percent of marks opted Arts programme in the study area

Sl. No.	Group/Combination	Gender of the Respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
1	B.Sc	25 (62.5%) (36.8%)	15 (37.5%) (26.3%)	40 (100.00%) (32.0%)	
2	B.Com	25 (45.5%) (36.8%)	30 (54.5%) (52.6%)	55 (100.00%) (44%)	
3	B.A	18 (60%) (26.5%)	12 (40.0%) (21.1%)	30 (100.0%) (24.0%)	
	Total	68 (54.4%) (100.0%)	57 (45.6%) (100.0%)	125 (100.0%) (100.0%)	
Sl. No	Group/Combination	Medium of Instruction at Intermediate (plus two) level			
		English	Telugu	Total	
4	B.Sc	24 (60.0%) (34.3%)	16 (40.0%) (29.1%)	40 (100.0%) (32.0%)	
5	B.Com	36 (65.5%) (51.4%)	19 (34.5%) (34.5%)	55 (100.0%) (44.0%)	
6	B.A	10 (33.3%) (14.3%)	20 (66.7%) (34.6%)	30 (100.0%) (24.0%)	
Sl. No	Group/Combination	Percentage of Marks at Intermediate (Plus two) level			
		80-100	60-80	40-60	Less than 40
7	B.Sc	10 (25.0%) (32.3%)	20 (50.0%) (37.7%)	10 (25.0%) (30.3%)	0 (0.0%) (0.0%)
8	B.Com	14 (25.5%) (45.2%)	22 (40.0%) (41.5.0%)	11 (20.0%) (33.3%)	8 (14.5%) (100.0%)
9	B.A	7 (23.3%) (22.6%)	11 (36.7%) (20.8%)	12 (40.0%) (36.4%)	0 (0.0%) (0.0%)
	Total	31 (24.8%) (100.0%)	53 (42.4%) (100.0%)	33 (26.4%) (100.0%)	8 (6.4%) (100.0%)

Table No.1 : Basic Features of The Sampled Respondents

Information relating to Parents:

Levels of living of the parents also will have a positive impact on the LSRW skills of the students. Hence, the data collected and presented in Table-2, Occupation of the parents also plays vital role in determining the levels of attainment of language skills among the students at UG level. It can be observed from the table that, most of the Agricultural families are opting for Arts courses followed by Commerce and Science. Whereas the children of own business/self employment are opting for the Commerce programmes. Science courses were mostly opted by the children of Employed parent. However, 07 others like disguised unemployed are also there. Their children opted commerce and science programmes.

It is a general notion that the people with higher incomes prefer science combinations and people with lower incomes prefer Arts combinations. Hence, the present study also solicited to collect the information regarding levels of income of the parents of respondents and the results are also summarized in the

Table. It can be observed from the table that, 30 per cent of the parents of science students have more than Rs. 30,000 per month, where as it is only around 15 percent in case of Arts and Commerce combinations. About half of the commerce respondent families have less than Rs. 20,000 per month. In case of Arts, about 83 per cent of the families have less than Rs. 30,000 per month. Hence, it can be concluded that levels of income also determines their choice of program.

An attempt is also made in the Table to present the data on the levels of education of the parents of surveyed respondents. It can be observed from the table that most of the parents with post graduation and above education were preferred Commerce (53 percent) followed by Science (32.5%). It is surprising to notice that about half of the parents with the education level above post graduation have joined their children in Arts courses with an aim of sending them for civil service examinations. Another notable observation from the table that out of 13 parents, 10 parents opted Science programmes particularly with computer combinations.

Sl. No.	Group/Combination	Occupation of the Parent					
		Agriculture	Own Business	Govt	Private	Others	Total
1	B.Sc	3 (7.5%) (15.0%)	8 (20.0%) (22.2%)	11 (27.5%) (39.3%)	16 (40.0%) (47.1%)	2 (5.0%) (28.6%)	40 (100.0%) (32.0%)
2	B.Com	7 (12.7%) (35.0%)	20 (36.4%) (55.6%)	13 (23.6%) (46.4%)	10 (18.2%) (29.4%)	5 (9.1%) (71.4%)	55 (100.0%) (44.0%)
3	B.A	10 (33.0%) (50.0%)	8 (26.7%) (22.2%)	4 (13.3%) (14.3%)	8 (26.7%) (23.5%)	0 (0.0%) (0.0%)	30 (100.0%) (24.0%)
	Total	20 (16.0%) (100.0%)	36 (28.8%) (100.0%)	28 (22.4%) (100.0%)	34 (27.2%) (100.0%)	7 (5.6%) (100.0%)	125 (100.0%) (100.0%)
Sl. No	Group/Combination	Income level of the Parent					
		< 10K	10-20K	20-30K	30-40K	40-50K	Total
4	B.Sc	3 (7.5%) (16.7%)	14 (35.0%) (32.6%)	11 (27.5%) (28.9%)	9 (22.5%) (50.0%)	3 (7.5%) (37.5%)	40 (100.0%) (32.0%)
5	B.Com	10 (18.2%) (55.6%)	22 (40.0%) (51.2%)	14 (25.5%) (36.8%)	8 (14.5%) (44.4%)	1 (1.8%) (12.5%)	55 (100.0%) (44.0%)
6	B.A	5 (16.7%) (27.8%)	7 (23.3%) (16.3%)	13 (43.3%) (34.2%)	1 (3.3%) (5.6%)	4 (13.3%) (50.0%)	30 (100.0%) (24.0%)
Sl. No	Group/Combination	Education level of the Parent					
		Illiterate	Upto Inter	Graduate	PG	Above PG	Total
7	B.Sc	10 (25.0%) (76.9%)	14 (35.0%) (41.2%)	3 (7.5%) (10.7%)	11 (27.5%) (29.7%)	2 (5.0%) (15.4%)	40 (100.0%) (32.0%)
8	B.Com	1 (1.8%) (7.7%)	12 (21.8%) (35.3%)	13 (23.6%) (46.4%)	24 (43.6%) (64.9%)	5 (9.1%) (38.5%)	55 (100.0%) (44.0%)
9	B.A	2 (6.7%) (15.4%)	8 (26.7%) (23.5%)	12 (40.0%) (42.9%)	2 (6.7%) (5.4%)	6 (20.0%) (46.2%)	30 (100.0%) (24%)
	Total	13 (10.4%) (100.0%)	34 (27.2%) (100.0%)	28 (22.4%) (100.0%)	37 (29.6%) (100.0%)	13 (10.4%) (100.0%)	125 (100.0%) (100.0%)

Table No.2 : Basic Features of The Parents

Results on LSRW Skills of the Respondent

The data on distribution of sample by program and ability of the student on writing skills is collected and submitted in Table No. 3. It can be observed from the table that, writing skills among arts respondents is comparatively very less. About two thirds of the Arts sample found under Good and Average categories. On the other hand more than two thirds of Science students have either Excellent or Very Good writing abilities. In case of Commerce most of the students (43.6%) stood at Very Good category. The Table is devoted to analyze the results

on the Listening Skills of the surveyed respondents It can be observed from the table that, listening abilities are better than writing skills in case of Arts students. Out of 30 Arts sample, 21 (70%) stood at Very Good and Good categories. Similar results are also found in case of Commerce. In case of Science students, about two thirds of the sample was found in Excellent/very good Category. Hence it can be stated that most of the science students have better listening skills followed by Commerce and Arts.

An attempt is also made in the study to examine the Reading Skills of the students in the study area. It can be observed from the study that the reading skills are far better in all the three programme students. Only about 9 percent of entire sample found in Average category. Around 67 per cent of Science and Commerce students stood at Excellent and Very Good categories, where it is 63 per cent in case of Arts Student. Hence it can be stated that the overall impression on the Reading skills among the students in the study area are Good.

The results on levels of skills of the students, in the Table, reveals that these skills are comparatively less among Science students followed by Arts and Commerce students under Excellent category. In case of Very Good category most of the Commerce students found here followed by Science and Arts students. So it can be stated that most of the students in the study area have better writing skills but their Communication skills are not good as other skills. Hence there is an urgent need to provide those skills to the students of UG in general and in the study area in particular

Group/ Program	Ability of the students on Writing Skills				Total
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Average	
B. Sc	10 25.0%	17 42.5%	8 27.5%	2 5.0%	40 100.0%
	45.5%	36.2%	29.7%	10.5%	32.2%
B.Com	8 14.5%	24 42.5%	16 29.1%	7 12.7%	55 100.0%
	36.4%	51.1%	43.2%	36.8%	44.0%
B.A	4 13.3%	6 20.0%	10 33.3%	10 33.3%	30 100.0%
	18.2%	12.8%	27.0%	52.6%	24.0%
Total	22 17.6%	47 37.6%	37 29.6%	19 15.2%	125 100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ability of the students on listening Skills					
B. Sc	11 27.5%	14 35.0%	8 20.0%	7 17.5%	40 100.0%
	50.0%	27.5%	26.7%	31.8%	32.2%
B.Com	9 16.4%	25 45.5%	13 23.6%	8 14.5%	55 100.0%
	40.9%	49.0%	43.3%	36.4%	44.0%
B.A	2 6.7%	12 40.0%	9 30.0%	7 23.3%	30 100.0%
	9.1%	23.5%	30.0%	31.8%	24.0%
Total	22 17.6%	51 40.8%	30 24.0%	22 17.6%	125 100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ability of the students on Reading Skills					
B. Sc	13 32.5%	14 35.0%	8 20.0%	5 12.5%	40 100.0%
	46.4%	25.5%	25.8%	45.5%	32.2%
B.Com	11 20.0%	26 47.3%	16 29.1%	2 3.6%	55 100.0%
	39.3%	47.3%	51.6%	18.2%	44.0%
B.A	4 13.3%	15 50.0%	7 23.3%	4 13.3%	30 100.0%
	14.3%	27.3%	22.6%	36.4%	24.0%
Total	28 22.4%	55 44.0%	31 24.8%	11 8.8%	125 100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ability of the students on Communication Skills					
B. Sc	8 20.0%	18 45.0%	13 32.5%	1 2.5%	40 100.0%
	23.5%	32.7%	48.1%	11.1%	32.2%
B.Com	19 34.5%	23 41.8%	9 16.4%	4 7.3%	55 100.0%
	55.9%	41.8%	33.3%	44.4%	44.0%
B.A	7 23.3%	14 46.7%	5 16.7%	4 13.3%	30 100.0%
	20.6%	25.5%	18.5%	44.4%	24.0%
Total	34 27.2%	55 44.0%	27 21.6%	9 7.2%	125 100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table -3 : Ability of The Student on LSRW Skills

5. Summary and Conclusions

In the light of above detailed description, it can be concluded that the proficiency in English language broadens student's minds, develops emotional skills, improves the quality of life by providing job opportunities. Finally, it can be observed in the study that, students are slowly moving towards the English medium instructions and they will reap good results if certain skill enhancement programs in the new policy of the government. They felt that it will improve their employable skills. They also felt that public sector recruitment through UPSC, APPSC, SSC, BSRB also test language proficiency. Hence it will enhance their chances of getting better benefit in facing competitive examinations.

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